

Website Surfs to New Heights

Riding the Internet wave, Travel Montana's (TM) main site VisitMT.com registered nearly 5 million visitor sessions in 2005. This year's site visitation propelled TM's growth 57% over 2004, well eclipsing the average 20% growth seen in previous years. TM's dedicated web staff has worked diligently throughout the year to make their sites more search-engine friendly as well as more useful and accessible to users.

These improvements include:

- Optimizing the dynamic display pages for search engines to better catalog tourism businesses and attractions.
- Improving the manner in which the site communicates with search engines thus increasing placement on search engines.
- Creating more usable directory listings that include rollover descriptions of the various tourism businesses and attractions being searched on.
- Developing an enhanced three-column layout on the detail pages with better picture display for tourism businesses and attractions.

- Generating easier and more sophisticated search options including a more comprehensive and easier to use 'Advanced Search' function.

All of these enhancements in addition to people having more comfort and accessibility to computers is fueling this online growth. By continually evaluating and improving their web presence, TM is creating a better online experience for visitors.

See the chart below for a summary of visitor sessions on our primary websites.

On the Trail of Dinos

Facilities Report 197,000 Visitors in First Year of Trail Promotion

An estimated 197,000 visitors were counted at the Montana Dinosaur Trail facilities (12 of 13 reporting) January through September/October 2005. The number of visitors counted at each facility ranged from over 1,000 at Jordan's Garfield County Museum and the Fort Peck Paleontology Inc. Field Station to 89,508 at the Museum of the Rockies in Bozeman.

The Montana Dinosaur Trail is a cooperative promotion and development program financed by six local and regional

organizations and three state and federal agencies. The official promotion consisting of a web portal (www.mtdinotrail.org), a brochure and publicity kicked off in May 2005 with the grand opening of the Fort Peck Interpretive Center.

In its second year of operation, the trail will add Chinook's Blaine County Museum to its list of highlighted facilities. Other facilities are improving or adding to their dinosaur displays and buildings, developing field dig programs to provide visitors with hands-on experiences, or increasing their local promotion and trail products for sale in their gift shops.



RMI Roundup Reminder

The Rocky Mountain International (RMI) Roundup provides an opportunity for businesses, destinations and attractions within the region to meet face-to-face with targeted tour operators from Europe who specifically want to do business in Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota and Idaho. This year's Round Up will be held March 30-April 1, 2006 in Butte at the Copper King Hotel. The cost to attend is \$475, which includes registration, materials and meals for up to two participants. For more information contact Pam Gosink, pgosink@mt.gov (406-841-2894) or Nancy Hall or Scott Balyo of RMI, sbalyo@rmi-realamerica.com (307-637-4977).

Governor's Conference Materials Online

2006 Montana Governor's Conference on Tourism & Recreation reminder postcards hit the mail in January. If you did not receive one, but want to be on the

Web Stats				
Web Trends summary of visitor sessions on Montana Promotion Division's primary web sites. A visitor session is a session of activity (all hits) for one user of a web site.				
	2004	2005	Difference '04 to '05	Percentages
Visitmt	2,913,747	4,573,664	1,659,917	57%
MT Kids	1,014,272	1,420,870	406,598	40%
Winter	916,646	984,765	68,119	7%
Lewis & Clark	281,724	373,934	92,210	33%
Dinosaur Trail*	n/a	61,351	n/a	n/a
Indian Nations	168,075	277,119	109,044	65%
MT Film	222,797	366,569	143,772	65%
MT Groups	103,728	146,787	43,059	42%
MT Meetings	67,074	118,853	51,779	77%
Intranet	205,494	299,922	94,427	46%

*went live in April 2005

conference's hard copy mail list, send your contact information to Victor at vbjornberg@mt.gov or call 406-841-2795. The hard copy registration brochure and agenda will be mailed in February.

All of the Governor's Conference registration, sponsor/exhibitor and agenda materials are currently available online at: www.travelmontana.mt.gov/conference.

Great Falls Conference Hosts Offering Monday Night Fun At C.M. Russell Art Museum, Reservations Requested

The Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce's Convention & Event Committee and the C.M. Russell Museum are offering 2006 conference attendees a "Night With Charlie Russell" Good Ol' Montana Barbeque & Entertainment at the C.M. Russell Museum. This happens Monday, April 10, 2006, 6:30-9:30 p.m. during the "Free Night in Great Falls" part of the conference. Bus transportation will be provided to and from the Heritage Inn. The event sponsors are providing two free drink tickets, food, a no-host bar, entertainment, museum tours and fun in one of Great Falls' (and Montana's) finest art facilities. The cost is \$15 with reservations or RSVPs requested. For more information, contact: Mariam Martinson, Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce, 406-761-4434 ext. 106, FAX 406-761-6129 or mmartinson@greatfallschamber.org.

And the Award Goes To...

Do you know of a Montanan, Montana community or special event whose efforts have enhanced tourism's role in Montana's economy? If you do, nominate them for a

2006 Montana Tourism Award including: Tourism Person of the Year, Tourism Community of the Year, Tourism Event of the Year and Tourism Partnership of the Year. The awards will be presented by Governor Brian Schweitzer at the 2006 Governor's Conference.

Nomination forms are available from the Montana Promotion Division by contacting Barb Sanem at 406-841-2769 or bsanem@mt.gov. The forms are also available electronically at www.travelmontana.mt.gov/conference/awards.shtm. The deadline for nominations is March 17, 2006.

Montana Shines at Sundance

The Montana Film Office teamed up with members of the Montana Film and Television Advisory Council to spread the word about Montana's new film incentives at the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, UT. Council members Chris Arnold, Cinda Holt and Chris Cronyn joined Film Office staffer John Ansotegui at the Filmmaker's Lodge to help educate independent filmmakers how Montana's new incentives, coupled with federal tax credits, will help them keep their next project under budget. In addition, the Images of Nature Gallery was once again the venue for a western hospitality reception co-hosted by Montana and their *Film The West* marketing consortium of Wyoming, Idaho and South Dakota. The reception provided Montana with unfettered access to filmmakers and other industry representatives providing another key opportunity to share what Montana offers.

Update Going Electronic

In response to Governor's Schweitzer's request of all state government to conserve on costs whenever possible we plan to do our part by transitioning this monthly Travel Montana/Montana Film Office Update to an electronic newsletter in the coming months. We need your help in accomplishing this. Please provide us with an email address to which you would like sent the monthly Update. Please send this email address along with your name and business name to: TMUpdate@visitmt.com.

Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided to disabled persons on request.

Calendar of Events

February

- 1-4 Go West Summit, St. George, UT
- 3-8 American Bus Association Convention, Nashville, TN
- 6-8 Tourism Advisory Council Meeting, Fairmont Hot Springs, Anaconda, MT
- 16-22 Big Sky Documentary Film Festival, Missoula, MT

March

- 4-8 Bank Travel Conference, Mobile, AL
- 9-11 Museum Association of Montana Conference, Fort Benton, MT
- 17 Tourism Awards Deadline
- 22-26 National Tour Association (NTA) Spring Meet, Louisville, KY
- 30-4/1 RMI Roundup, Butte, MT

For all of the latest Montana tourism industry information log on to:
travelmontana.mt.gov



Travel Montana • Montana Film Office
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